

BACK TO BASICS: BELIEVING IN THE CHURCH

Scripture used: [Acts 2:42-47 \(NIV\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Continuing the “Back to Basics” series, Pastor Tilden shared a heartfelt and personal message about his own relationship with the Church. Disbelief in the church can have good reasons: a history of abuse, politics, hypocrisy... Pastor Tilden went through his own moment of deep doubt about 10 years ago, when he worked at a church in crisis, shaken by moral failings from two different pastors. There was drama, dysfunction, and institutional pain. Pastor Tilden prayed to God: “Please let me be done with the Church.” He longed to be called to another vocation. He then realized he still believed in the power and potential of the church. Every Christian has an indispensable role to play in the life of the church. The call from Pastor Hurmon to team up to start a new church came soon after.

KEY POINTS

1. Our Scripture gives a beautiful illustration of what the church is supposed to be: a glad and sincere group where everyone matters, a joyful community of care that is growing with God and making a difference in the world. But this does not tell the full story of the early church. There was a broader story of beauty and brokenness - with struggles not unlike what we have in the church today. As the church became more diverse, arguments broke out as to whether people were being treated equally and fairly, with discussions about whom to accept, and controversies about what to do with “different people” . The original church were people who were “fully Jewish”: observant of all of the Jewish traditions. But many of the new Gentile converts were reluctant to follow these same traditions.
2. [1 Corinthians 13:4](#): Love is patient, love is kind. This was not originally written for weddings! It was an encouragement to persevere in love for the early Christians with all their diversity. In [Ephesians 2:14-22](#), Paul teaches that the church has to be “Jesus-first.” Jesus alone is our peace, and we all have access to the Father through him - we are no longer strangers but members of His household, His dwelling, with Him as the cornerstone. This was written to address the challenge of the church at the time: going through expansion and the strife and disagreement that often come from fast growth. The early church needed a reminder that Jesus is first - He is doing something new, creating a new humanity.
3. Our core identity as Jesus followers is citizenship in God’s kingdom. Jewish people saw themselves as part of Israel. Those who were full-fledged Roman citizens treasured the pride and perks that came with this status. Paul called them to transcend those old labels and derive their sense of “belonging” from God’s kingdom; to see their identity flow from Jesus’ character.
4. The church cannot be divided across class, race, age, politics. If it puts these things first, and ceases to put Jesus first, it will inevitably lose its integrity and transparency. It will cover its failings instead of repenting. It will use worldly tools to force its agenda, instead of using sacrificial love to change the world. Jesus died for the church, He rose, and He’s working through the Spirit to lead and heal the church, to keep it accountable, to shine the light that we need. Pastor Tilden personally experienced the power and reality of the church, which allowed him to sustain his belief in the church through a difficult period of disillusionment with the church. He had experienced the church’s power to be a place of grace, a place of radical generosity, and radical care in times of grief.
5. No church is perfect. But if we have been wounded in the past by a church, we should let God heal our wound and find a church that reflects God’s heart to be a part of. We should bring our best to church. We ought to engage, and not sit on the sidelines.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - What has been your best experience with church? What has been your worst experience with church? What is your current “gut” response to the church? Does your “gut” response help to grow your relationship with God, or does it hinder it?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider our passages for today, [Acts 2:42-47](#) and [Ephesians 2:14-22](#). How are these passages similar, and how are they different? In what ways have you experienced the reality of some of the dynamics of the Acts 2 church, perhaps at NBCC? Where has your experience with NBCC fallen short - and is that gap one that God might be calling you to make a difference in? As you reflect on the passage from Ephesians, consider the difference that everyone being “Jesus-first” in the community makes as opposed to putting other things first. How can we keep putting this into practice?
- 3) **DO** - If you need to let God heal a “church hurt” wound, or if you are committing anew to bring your best to church, reach out to the church! Contact your campus pastor or fill out a connection card!